THE TENT ON THE BEACH

WHITTIER

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J. E. B.

1868-

THE

TENT ON THE BEACH

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
1867.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1867, by
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University Press: Welch, Bigelow, & Co.,
Cambridge.

I WOULD not sin, in this half-playful strain, —
Too light perhaps for serious years, though born
Of the enforced leisure of slow pain, —
Against the pure ideal which has drawn
My feet to follow its far-shining gleam.
A simple plot is mine: legends and runes
Of credulous days, old fancies that have lain
Silent from boyhood taking voice again,
Warmed into life once more, even as the tunes
That, frozen in the fabled hunting-horn,
Thawed into sound: — a winter fireside dream
Of dawns and sunsets by the summer sea,
Whose sands are traversed by a silent throng
Of voyagers from that vaster mystery
Of which it is an emblem; — and the dear
Memory of one who might have tuned my song
To sweeter music by her delicate ear.

1st month, 1867.

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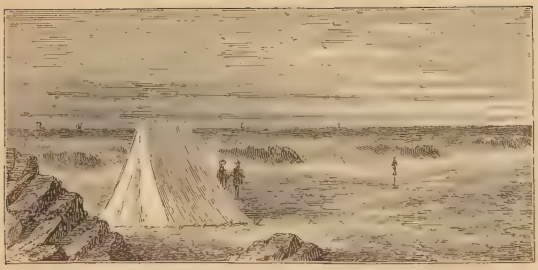
THE TENT ON THE BEACH.



THE TENT ON THE BEACH.

WHEN heats as of a tropic clime
Burned all our inland valleys through,
Three friends, the guests of summer time,
Pitched their white tent where sea-winds blew.
Behind them, marshes, seamed and crossed
With narrow creeks, and flower-embossed,
Stretched to the dark oak wood, whose leafy arms
Screened from the stormy East the pleasant inland farms.

At full of tide their bolder shore
Of sun-bleached sand the waters beat;
At ebb, a smooth and glistening floor
They touched with light, receding feet.
Northward a green bluff broke the chain
Of sand-hills; southward stretched a plain
Of salt grass, with a river winding down,
Sail-whitened, and beyond the steeples of the town,

Whence sometimes, when the wind was light
And dull the thunder of the beach,
They heard the bells of morn and night
Swing, miles away, their silver speech.
Above low scarp and turf-grown wall
They saw the fort flag rise and fall;
And, the first star to signal twilight's hour,
The lamp-fire glimmer down from the tall light-house tower.

They rested there, escaped awhile
From cares that wear the life away,
To eat the lotus of the Nile
And drink the poppies of Cathay, —
To fling their loads of custom down,
Like drift-weed, on the sand-slopes brown,
And in the sea waves drown the restless pack
Of duties, claims, and needs that barked upon their track.

One, with his beard scarce silvered, bore
A ready credence in his looks,
A lettered magnate, lording o'er
An ever-widening realm of books.
In him brain-currents, near and far,
Converged as in a Leyden jar;
The old, dead authors thronged him round about,
And Elzevir's gray ghosts from leathern graves looked out.

He knew each living pundit well,
Could weigh the gifts of him or her,
And well the market value tell
Of poet and philosopher.
But if he lost, the scenes behind,
Somewhat of reverence vague and blind,
Finding the actors human at the best,
No readier lips than his the good he saw confessed.

His boyhood fancies not outgrown,
He loved himself the singer's art;
Tenderly, gently, by his own
He knew and judged an author's heart.
No Rhadamanthine brow of doom
Bowed the dazed pedant from his room;
And bards, whose name is legion, if denied,
Bore off alike intact their verses and their pride.

Pleasant it was to roam about
The lettered world as he had done,
And see the lords of song without
Their singing robes and garlands on.
With Wordsworth paddle Rydal mere,
Taste rugged Elliott's home-brewed beer,
And with the ears of Rogers, at fourscore,
Hear Garrick's buskined tread and Walpole's wit once more.

And one there was, a dreamer born,
Who, with a mission to fulfil,
Had left the Muses' haunts to turn
The crank of an opinion-mill,
Making his rustic reed of song
A weapon in the war with wrong,
Yoking his fancy to the breaking-plough
That beam-deep turned the soil for truth to spring and grow.

Too quiet seemed the man to ride
The winged Hippogriff Reform;
Was his a voice from side to side
To pierce the tumult of the storm?
A silent, shy, peace-loving man,
He seemed no fiery partisan
To hold his way against the public frown,
The ban of Church and State, the fierce mob's
hounding down.

For while he wrought with strenuous will
The work his hands had found to do,
He heard the fitful music still
Of winds that out of dream-land blew.
The din about him could not drown
What the strange voices whispered down;
Along his task-field weird processions swept,
The visionary pomp of stately phantoms stepped.

The common air was thick with dreams, —
He told them to the toiling crowd ;
Such music as the woods and streams
Sang in his ear he sang aloud ;
In still, shut bays, on windy capes,
He heard the call of beckoning shapes,
And, as the gray old shadows prompted him,
To homely moulds of rhyme he shaped their legends grim.

He rested now his weary hands,
And lightly moralized and laughed,
As, tracing on the shifting sands
A burlesque of his paper-craft,
He saw the careless waves o'errun
His words, as time before had done,
Each day's tide-water washing clean away,
Like letters from the sand, the work of yesterday.

And one, whose Arab face was tanned
By tropic sun and boreal frost,
So travelled there was scarce a land
Or people left him to exhaust,
In idling mood had from him hurled
The poor squeezed orange of the world,
And in the tent-shade, as beneath a palm,
Smoked, cross-legged like a Turk, in Oriental calm.

The very waves that washed the sand
Below him, he had seen before
Whitening the Scandinavian strand
And sultry Mauritanian shore.
From ice-rimmed isles, from summer seas
Palm-fringed, they bore him messages;
He heard the plaintive Nubian songs again,
And mule-bells tinkling down the mountain-paths of Spain.

His memory round the ransacked earth
On Ariel's girdle slid at ease;
And, instant, to the valley's girth
Of mountains, spice isles of the seas,
Faith flowered in minster stones, Art's guess
At truth and beauty, found access;
Yet loved the while, that free cosmopolite,
Old friends, old ways, and kept his boyhood's dreams in sight.

Untouched as yet by wealth and pride,
That virgin innocence of beach:
No shingly monster, hundred-eyed,
Stared its gray sand-birds out of reach;
Unhoused, save where, at intervals,
The white tents showed their canvas walls,
Where brief sojourners, in the cool, soft air,
Forgot their inland heats, hard toil, and year-long care.

Sometimes along the wheel-deep sand
A one-horse wagon slowly crawled,
Deep laden with a youthful band,
Whose look some homestead old recalled;
Brother perchance, and sisters twain,
And one whose blue eyes told, more plain
Than the free language of her rosy lip,
Of the still dearer claim of love's relationship.

With cheeks of russet-orchard tint,
The light laugh of their native rills,
The perfume of their garden's mint,
The breezy freedom of the hills,
They bore, in unrestrained delight,
The motto of the Garter's knight,
Careless as if from every gazing thing
Hid by their innocence, as Gyges by his ring.

The clanging sea-fowl came and went,
The hunter's gun in the marshes rang;
At nightfall from a neighboring tent
A flute-voiced woman sweetly sang.
Loose-haired, barefooted, hand in hand,
Young girls went tripping down the sand;
And youths and maidens, sitting in the moon,
Dreamed o'er the old fond dream from which we wake too soon.

At times their fishing-lines they plied,
With an old Triton at the oar,
Salt as the sea-wind, tough and dried
As a lean cusk from Labrador.
Strange tales he told of wreck and storm,—
Had seen the sea-snake's awful form,
And heard the ghosts on Haley's Isle complain,
Speak him off shore, and beg a passage to old Spain!

And there, on breezy morns, they saw
The fishing-schooners outward run,
Their low-bent sails in tack and flaw
Turned white or dark to shade and sun.
Sometimes, in calms of closing day,
They watched the spectral mirage play,
Saw low, far islands looming tall and nigh,
And ships, with upturned keels, sail like a sea the sky.

Sometimes a cloud, with thunder black,
Stooped low upon the darkening main,
Piercing the waves along its track
With the slant javelins of rain.
And when west-wind and sunshine warm
Chased out to sea its wrecks of storm,
They saw the prismy hues in thin spray showers
Where the green buds of waves burst into white froth flowers.

And when along the line of shore
The mists crept upward chill and damp,
Stretched, careless, on their sandy floor
Beneath the flaring lantern lamp,
They talked of all things old and new,
Read, slept, and dreamed as idlers do ;
And in the unquestioned freedom of the tent,
Body and o'er-taxed mind to healthful ease unbent.

Once, when the sunset splendors died,
And, trampling up the sloping sand,
In lines outreaching far and wide,
The white-maned billows swept to land,
Dim seen across the gathering shade,
A vast and ghostly cavalcade,
They sat around their lighted kerosene,
Hearing the deep bass roar their every pause between.

Then, urged thereto, the Editor
Within his full portfolio dipped,
Feigning excuse while searching for
(With secret pride) his manuscript.
His pale face flushed from eye to beard,
With nervous cough his throat he cleared,
And, in a voice so tremulous it betrayed
The anxious fondness of an author's heart, he read:

THE WRECK OF RIVERMOUTH.

Rivermouth Rocks are fair to see,
By dawn or sunset shone across,
When the ebb of the sea has left them free,
To dry their fringes of gold-green moss:
For there the river comes winding down
From salt sea-meadows and uplands brown,
And waves on the outer rocks afoam
Shout to its waters, "Welcome home!"

And fair are the sunny isles in view
East of the grisly Head of the Boar,
And Agamenticus lifts its blue
Disk of a cloud the woodlands o'er;
And southerly, when the tide is down,
'Twixt white sea-waves and sand-hills brown,
The beach-birds dance and the gray gulls wheel
Over a floor of burnished steel.

Once, in the old Colonial days,
Two hundred years ago and more,
A boat sailed down through the winding ways
Of Hampton River to that low shore,
Full of a goodly company
Sailing out on the summer sea,
Veering to catch the land-breeze light,
With the Boar to left and the Rocks to right.

In Hampton meadows, where mowers laid
Their scythes to the swaths of salted grass,
"Ah, well-a-day! our hay must be made!"
A young man sighed, who saw them pass.
Loud laughed his fellows to see him stand
Whetting his scythe with a listless hand,
Hearing a voice in a far-off song,
Watching a white hand beckoning long.

"Fie on the witch!" cried a merry girl,
As they rounded the point where Goody Cole
Sat by her door with her wheel atwirl,
A bent and blear-eyed poor old soul.
"Oho!" she muttered, "ye 're brave to-day!
But I hear the little waves laugh and say,
'The broth will be cold that waits at home;
For it 's one to go, but another to come!'"

"She 's cursed," said the skipper; "speak her fair:
I 'm scary always to see her shake
Her wicked head, with its wild gray hair,
And nose like a hawk, and eyes like a snake."
But merrily still, with laugh and shout,
From Hampton River the boat sailed out,
Till the huts and the flakes on Star seemed nigh,
And they lost the scent of the pines of Rye.

They dropped their lines in the lazy tide,
Drawing up haddock and mottled cod;
They saw not the Shadow that walked beside,
They heard not the feet with silence shod.
But thicker and thicker a hot mist grew,
Shot by the lightnings through and through;
And muffled growls, like the growl of a beast,
Ran along the sky from west to east.

Then the skipper looked from the darkening sea
Up to the dimmed and wading sun;
But he spake like a brave man cheerily,
"Yet there is time for our homeward run."
Veering and tacking, they backward wore;
And just as a breath from the woods ashore
Blew out to whisper of danger past,
The wrath of the storm came down at last!

The skipper hauled at the heavy sail:
"God be our help!" he only cried,
As the roaring gale, like the stroke of a flail,
Smote the boat on its starboard side.
The Shoalsmen looked, but saw alone
Dark films of rain-cloud slantwise blown,
Wild rocks lit up by the lightning's glare,
The strife and torment of sea and air.

Goody Cole looked out from her door:
The Isles of Shoals were drowned and gone,
Scarcely she saw the Head of the Boar
Toss the foam from tusks of stone.
She clasped her hands with a grip of pain,
The tear on her cheek was not of rain:
"They are lost," she muttered, "boat and crew!
Lord, forgive me! my words were true!"

Suddenly seaward swept the squall;
The low sun smote through cloudy rack;
The Shoals stood clear in the light, and all
The trend of the coast lay hard and black.
But far and wide as eye could reach,
No life was seen upon wave or beach;
The boat that went out at morning never
Sailed back again into Hampton River.

O mower, lean on thy bended snath,
Look from the meadows green and low:
The wind of the sea is a waft of death,
The waves are singing a song of woe!
By silent river, by moaning sea,
Long and vain shall thy watching be:
Never again shall the sweet voice call,
Never the white hand rise and fall!

O Rivermouth Rocks, how sad a sight
Ye saw in the light of breaking day!
Dead faces looking up cold and white
From sand and sea-weed where they lay
The mad old witch-wife wailed and wept,
And cursed the tide as it backward crept:
"Crawl back, crawl back, blue water-snake!
Leave your dead for the hearts that break!"

Solemn it was in that old day
In Hampton town and its log-built church,
Where side by side the coffins lay
And the mourners stood in aisle and porch.
In the singing-seats young eyes were dim,
The voices faltered that raised the hymn,
And Father Dalton, grave and stern,
Sobbed through his prayer and wept in turn.

But his ancient colleague did not pray,
Because of his sin at fourscore years:
He stood apart, with the iron-gray
Of his strong brows knitted to hide his tears.
And a wretched woman, holding her breath
In the awful presence of sin and death,
Cowered and shrank, while her neighbors thronged
To look on the dead her shame had wronged.

Apart with them, like them forbid,
Old Goody Cole looked drearily round,
As, two by two, with their faces hid,
The mourners walked to the burying-ground.
She let the staff from her clasped hands fall:
"Lord, forgive us! we 're sinners all!"
And the voice of the old man answered her:
"Amen!" said Father Bachiler.

So, as I sat upon Appledore
In the calm of a closing summer day,
And the broken lines of Hampton shore
In purple mist of cloudland lay,
The Rivermouth Rocks their story told;
And waves aglow with sunset gold,
Rising and breaking in steady chime,
Beat the rhythm and kept the time.

And the sunset paled, and warmed once more
With a softer, tenderer after-glow;
In the east was moon-rise, with boats off-shore
And sails in the distance drifting slow.
The beacon glimmered from Portsmouth bar,
The White Isle kindled its great red star;
And life and death in my old-time lay
Mingled in peace like the night and day!

"Well!" said the Man of Books, "your story
Is not ill told in pleasant verse.
As the Celt said of purgatory,
One might go farther and fare worse."
The reader laughed; and once again
With steadier voice took up his strain,
While the fair singer from the neighboring tent
Drew near, and at his side a graceful listener bent.

THE GRAVE BY THE LAKE.

WHERE the Great Lake's sunny smiles
Dimple round its hundred isles,
And the mountain's granite ledge
Cleaves the water like a wedge,
Ringed about with smooth, gray stones,
Rest the giant's mighty bones.

Close beside, in shade and gleam,
Laughs and ripples Melvin stream;
Melvin water, mountain-born,
All fair flowers its banks adorn;
All the woodland's voices meet,
Mingling with its murmurs sweet.

Over lowlands forest-grown,
Over waters island-strown,
Over silver-sanded beach,
Leaf-locked bay and misty reach,
Melvin stream and burial-heap,
Watch and ward the mountains keep.

Who that Titan cromlech fills?
Forest-kaiser, lord o' the hills?
Knight who on the birchen tree
Carved his savage heraldry?
Priest o' the pine-wood temples dim,
Prophet, sage, or wizard grim?

Rugged type of primal man,
Grim utilitarian,
Loving woods for hunt and prowl,

Lake and hill for fish and fowl,
As the brown bear blind and dull
To the grand and beautiful:

Not for him the lesson drawn
From the mountains smit with dawn.
Star-rise, moon-rise, flowers of May,
Sunset's purple bloom of day, —
Took his life no hue from thence,
Poor amid such affluence?

Haply unto hill and tree
All too near akin was he:
Unto him who stands afar
Nature's marvels greatest are;
Who the mountain purple seeks
Must not climb the higher peaks.

Yet who knows in winter tramp,
Or the midnight of the camp,
What revealings faint and far,
Stealing down from moon and star,
Kindled in that human clod
Thought of destiny and God?

Stateliest forest patriarch,
Grand in robes of skin and bark,
What sepulchral mysteries,
What weird funeral-rites, were his?
What sharp wail, what drear lament,
Back scared wolf and eagle sent?

Now, whate'er he may have been,
Low he lies as other men;
On his mound the partridge drums,

There the noisy blue-jay comes;
Rank nor name nor pomp has he
In the grave's democracy.

Part thy blue lips, Northern lake!
Moss-grown rocks, your silence break!
Tell the tale, thou ancient tree!
Thou, too, slide-worn Ossipee!
Speak, and tell us how and when
Lived and died this king of men!

Wordless moans the ancient pine;
Lake and mountain give no sign;
Vain to trace this ring of stones;
Vain the search of crumbling bones:
Deepest of all mysteries,
And the saddest, silence is.

Nameless, noteless, clay with clay
Mingles slowly day by day;
But somewhere, for good or ill,
That dark soul is living still;
Somewhere yet that atom's force
Moves the light-poised universe.

Strange that on his burial-sod
Harebells bloom, and golden-rod,
While the soul's dark horoscope
Holds no starry sign of hope!
Is the Unseen with sight at odds?
Nature's pity more than God's?

Thus I mused by Melvin side,
While the summer eventide
Made the woods and inland sea

And the mountains mystery;
And the hush of earth and air
Seemed the pause before a prayer, —

Prayer for him, for all who rest,
Mother Earth, upon thy breast, —
Lapped on Christian turf, or hid
In rock-cave or pyramid:
All who sleep, as all who live,
Well may need the prayer, "Forgive!"

Desert-smothered caravan,
Knee-deep dust that once was man,
Battle-trenches ghastly piled,
Ocean-floors with white bones tiled,
Crowded tomb and mounded sod,
Dumbly crave that prayer to God.

O the generations old
Over whom no church-bells tolled,
Christless, lifting up blind eyes
To the silence of the skies!
For the innumerable dead
Is my soul disquieted.

Where be now these silent hosts?
Where the camping-ground of ghosts?
Where the spectral conscripts led
To the white tents of the dead?
What strange shore or chartless sea
Holds the awful mystery?

Then the warm sky stooped to make
Double sunset in the lake;
While above I saw with it,
Range on range, the mountains lit;

And the calm and splendor stole
Like an answer to my soul.

Hear'st thou, O of little faith,
What to thee the mountain saith,
What is whispered by the trees? —
"Cast on God thy care for these;
Trust him, if thy sight be dim:
Doubt for them is doubt of Him.

"Blind must be their close-shut eyes
Where like night the sunshine lies,
Fiery-linked the self-forged chain
Binding ever sin to pain,
Strong their prison-house of will,
But without He waiteth still.

"Not with hatred's undertow
Doth the Love Eternal flow;

Every chain that spirits wear
Crumbles in the breath of prayer;
And the penitent's desire
Opens every gate of fire.

"Still Thy love, O Christ arisen,
Yearns to reach these souls in prison!
Through all depths of sin and loss
Drops the plummet of Thy cross!
Never yet abyss was found
Deeper than that cross could sound!"

Therefore well may Nature keep
Equal faith with all who sleep,
Set her watch of hills around
Christian grave and heathen mound,
And to cairn and kirkyard send
Summer's flowery dividend.

Keep, O pleasant Melvin stream,
Thy sweet laugh in shade and gleam!
On the Indian's grassy tomb
Swing, O flowers, your bells of bloom!
Deep below, as high above,
Sweeps the circle of God's love.

He paused and questioned with his eye
The hearers' verdict on his song.
A low voice asked: "Is 't well to pry
Into the secrets which belong
Only to God? — The life to be
Is still the unguessed mystery:
Our part is simple trust and reverent awe,
For who hath known His mind, or been His counsellor?"

"But faith beyond our sight may go,"
He said; "the gracious Fatherhood
Can only know above, below,
Eternal purposes of good.
From our free heritage of will,
The bitter springs of pain and ill
Here and hereafter flow. The perfect day
Of God is shadowless, and love is love alway."

"I know," she said, "the letter kills;
That on our arid fields of strife
And heat of clashing texts distils
The dew of spirit and of life.
But, searching still the written Word,
I fain would find, Thus saith the Lord,
A voucher for the hope I also feel
That sin can give no wound beyond love's power
to heal."

"Pray," said the Man of Books, "give o'er
A theme too vast for time and place.
Go on, Sir Poet, ride once more
Your hobby at his old free pace.
But let him keep, with step discreet,
The solid earth beneath his feet.
In the great mystery which around us lies,
The wisest is a fool, the fool Heaven helped is wise."

The Traveller said: "If songs have creeds,
Their choice of them let singers make;
But Art no other sanction needs
Than beauty for its own fair sake.
It grinds not in the mill of use,
Nor asks for leave, nor begs excuse;
It makes the flexile laws it deigns to own,
And gives its atmosphere its color and its tone.

"Confess, old friend, your austere school
Has left your fancy little chance;
You square to reason's rigid rule
The flowing outlines of romance.
With conscience keen from exercise,
And chronic fear of compromise,
You check the free play of your rhymes, to clap
A moral underneath, and spring it like a trap."

The sweet voice answered: "Better so,
Than, crowding sail, to drive to wreck;
Better to use the bit than throw
The reins all loose on passion's neck.
The poet's liberal range should be
The breadth of Christian liberty.
Was Milton's step less free because he trod
The hills of heaven, and walked, like Enoch, with
his God?

"The home-fare which our poet gives
Is simply common, not unclean;
The music of the life he lives,
He sings of what his eyes have seen.
Of narrow scope his verse may seem,
But rippled lake and singing stream
Find fitting audience, in themselves complete,
As the great sea that rolls its thunder at our feet."

With quick heart-glow, as one might meet,
Upon a pathway chill and stern,
Sunshine and bird-songs, and the sweet
Warm breath of brier-rose and fern,
The reader heard the grateful praise;
A half-incredulous amaze
Tempering the gladness which his looks confessed,
And stammering in the thanks his words but half expressed.

Laughing, the Critic bowed. "I yield
The point without another word;
Who ever yet a case appealed
Where beauty's judgment had been heard?
And you, my good friend, owe to me
Your warmest thanks for such a plea,
As true withal as sweet. For my offence
Of cavil, let her praise be ample recompense."

Across the sea one large, low star,
With crimson light that came and went,
Revolving on its tower afar,
Looked through the doorway of the tent.
While outward, over sand-slopes wet,
The lamp flashed down its yellow jet
On the long wash of waves, with red and green
Tangles of weltering weed through the white foam-wreaths seen.

"'Sing while we may, — another day
May bring enough of sorrow'; — thus
Our Traveller in his own sweet lay,
His Crimean camp-song, hints to us,"
The lady said. "So let it be;
Sing us a song," exclaimed all three.
She smiled: "I can but marvel at your choice
To hear our poet's words through my poor borrowed voice."

Her window opens to the bay,
On glistening light or misty gray,
And there at dawn and set of day
In prayer she kneels:
"Dear Lord!" she saith, "to many a home
From wind and wave the wanderers come;
I only see the tossing foam
Of stranger keels.

"Blown out and in by summer gales,
The stately ships, with crowded sails,
And sailors leaning o'er their rails,
Before me glide;
They come, they go, but nevermore,
Spice-laden from the Indian shore,
I see his swift-winged Isidore
The waves divide.

"O Thou! with whom the night is day
And one the near and far away,
Look out on yon gray waste, and say
Where lingers he.
Alive, perchance, on some lone beach
Or thirsty isle beyond the reach
Of man, he hears the mocking speech
Of wind and sea.

"O dread and cruel deep, reveal
The secret which thy waves conceal,
And, ye wild sea-birds, hither wheel
And tell your tale.
Let winds that tossed his raven hair
A message from my lost one bear, —
Some thought of me, a last fond prayer
Or dying wail!

"Come, with your dreariest truth shut out
The fears that haunt me round about;
O God! I cannot bear this doubt
That stifles breath.
The worst is better than the dread;
Give me but leave to mourn my dead
Asleep in trust and hope, instead
Of life in death!"

It might have been the evening breeze
That whispered in the garden trees,
It might have been the sound of seas
That rose and fell;
But, with her heart, if not her ear,
The old loved voice she seemed to hear:
"I wait to meet thee: be of cheer,
For all is well!"

The sweet voice into silence went,
While a low murmur of applause
From lip to lip ran round the tent;
And, after brief and fitting pause,
Glancing his written pages o'er,
The Reader tried his part once more;
Leaving the land of hackmatack and pine
For Tuscan valleys glad with olive and with vine.

THE BROTHER OF MERCY.

Piero Luca, known of all the town
As the gray porter by the Pitti wall
Where the noon shadows of the gardens fall,
Sick and in dolor, waited to lay down
His last sad burden, and beside his mat
The barefoot monk of La Certosa sat.

Unseen, in square and blossoming garden drifted,
Soft sunset lights through green Val d' Arno sifted;
Unheard, below the living shuttles shifted
Backward and forth, and wove, in love or strife,
In mirth or pain, the mottled web of life:
But when at last came upward from the street
Tinkle of bell and tread of measured feet,
The sick man started, strove to rise in vain,

Sinking back heavily with a moan of pain.
And the monk said, "'T is but the Brotherhood
Of Mercy going on some errand good:
Their black masks by the palace-wall I see."
Piero answered faintly, "Woe is me!
This day for the first time in forty years
In vain the bell hath sounded in my ears,
Calling me with my brethren of the mask,
Beggar and prince alike, to some new task
Of love or pity, — haply from the street
To bear a wretch plague-stricken, or, with feet
Hushed to the quickened ear and feverish brain,
To tread the crowded lazaretto's floors,
Down the long twilight of the corridors,
'Midst tossing arms and faces full of pain.
I loved the work: it was its own reward.
I never counted on it to offset
My sins, which are many, or make less my debt

To the free grace and mercy of our Lord;
But somehow, father, it has come to be
In these long years so much a part of me,
I should not know myself, if lacking it,
But with the work the worker too would die,
And in my place some other self would sit
Joyful or sad, — what matters, if not I?
And now all 's over. Woe is me!" — "My son,"
The monk said soothingly, "thy work is done;
And no more as a servant, but the guest
Of God thou enterest thy eternal rest.
No toil, no tears, no sorrow for the lost
Shall mar thy perfect bliss. Thou shalt sit down
Clad in white robes, and wear a golden crown
Forever and forever." — Piero tossed
On his sick pillow: "Miserable me!
I am too poor for such grand company;
The crown would be too heavy for this gray

Old head; and God forgive me if I say
It would be hard to sit there night and day,
Like an image in the Tribune, doing naught
With these hard hands, that all my life have wrought,
Not for bread only, but for pity's sake.
I 'm dull at prayers: I could not keep awake,
Counting my beads. Mine 's but a crazy head,
Scarce worth the saving, if all else be dead.
And if one goes to heaven without a heart,
God knows he leaves behind his better part.
I love my fellow-men; the worst I know
I would do good to. Will death change me so
That I shall sit among the lazy saints,
Turning a deaf ear to the sore complaints
Of souls that suffer? Why, I never yet
Left a poor dog in the *strada* hard beset,
Or ass o'erladen! Must I rate man less
Than dog or ass, in holy selfishness?

Methinks (Lord, pardon, if the thought be sin!)
The world of pain were better, if therein
One's heart might still be human, and desires
Of natural pity drop upon its fires
Some cooling tears."

Thereat the pale monk crossed
His brow, and, muttering, "Madman! thou art lost!"
Took up his pyx and fled; and, left alone,
The sick man closed his eyes with a great groan
That sank into a prayer, "Thy will be done!"

Then was he made aware, by soul or ear,
Of somewhat pure and holy bending o'er him,
And of a voice like that of her who bore him,
Tender and most compassionate: "Never fear!
For heaven is love, as God himself is love;
Thy work below shall be thy work above."
And when he looked, lo! in the stern monk's place
He saw the shining of an angel's face!

The Traveller broke the pause. "I 've seen
The Brothers down the long street steal,
Black, silent, masked, the crowd between,
And felt to doff my hat and kneel
With heart, if not with knee, in prayer,
For blessings on their pious care."
The Reader wiped his glasses: "Friends of mine,
We 'll try our home-brewed next, instead of foreign wine."

THE CHANGELING.

For the fairest maid in Hampton
They needed not to search,
Who saw young Anna Favor
Come walking into church,—

Or bringing from the meadows,
At set of harvest-day,
The frolic of the blackbirds,
The sweetness of the hay.

Now the weariest of all mothers,
The saddest two-years bride,
She scowls in the face of her husband,
And spurns her child aside.

"Rake out the red coals, goodman, —
For there the child shall lie,
Till the black witch comes to fetch her,
And both up chimney fly.

"It 's never my own little daughter,
It 's never my own," she said;
"The witches have stolen my Anna,
And left me an imp instead.

"O, fair and sweet was my baby,
Blue eyes, and hair of gold;
But this is ugly and wrinkled,
Cross, and cunning, and old.

"I hate the touch of her fingers,
I hate the feel of her skin;
It 's not the milk from my bosom,
But my blood, that she sucks in.

"My face grows sharp with the torment;
Look! my arms are skin and bone! —
Rake open the red coals, goodman,
And the witch shall have her own.

"She 'll come when she hears it crying,
In the shape of an owl or bat,
And she 'll bring us our darling Anna
In place of her screeching brat."

Then the goodman, Ezra Dalton,
Laid his hand upon her head:
"Thy sorrow is great, O woman!
I sorrow with thee," he said.

"The paths to trouble are many,
And never but one sure way
Leads out to the light beyond it:
My poor wife, let us pray."

Then he said to the great All-Father,
"Thy daughter is weak and blind;
Let her sight come back, and clothe her
Once more in her right mind.

"Lead her out of this evil shadow,
Out of these fancies wild;
Let the holy love of the mother
Turn again to her child.

"Make her lips like the lips of Mary
Kissing her blessed Son;
Let her hands, like the hands of Jesus,
Rest on her little one.

"Comfort the soul of thy handmaid,
Open her prison-door,
And thine shall be all the glory
And praise forevermore."

Then into the face of its mother
The baby looked up and smiled;
And the cloud of her soul was lifted,
And she knew her little child.

A beam of the slant west sunshine
Made the wan face almost fair,
Lit the blue eyes' patient wonder,
And the rings of pale gold hair.

She kissed it on lip and forehead,
She kissed it on cheek and chin,
And she bared her snow-white bosom
To the lips so pale and thin.

O, fair on her bridal morning
Was the maid who blushed and smiled,
But fairer to Ezra Dalton
Looked the mother of his child.

With more than a lover's fondness
He stooped to her worn young face,
And the nursing child and the mother
He folded in one embrace.

"Blessed be God!" he murmured.
"Blessed be God!" she said;
"For I see, who once was blinded,—
I live, who once was dead.

"Now mount and ride, my goodman,
As thou lovest thy own soul!
Woe 's me, if my wicked fancies
Be the death of Goody Cole!"

His horse he saddled and bridled,
And into the night rode he, —
Now through the great black woodland,
Now by the white-beached sea.

He rode through the silent clearings,
He came to the ferry wide,
And thrice he called to the boatman
Asleep on the other side.

He set his horse to the river,
He swam to Newbury town,
And he called up Justice Sewall
In his nightcap and his gown.

And the grave and worshipful justice
(Upon whose soul be peace!)
Set his name to the jailer's warrant
For Goodwife Cole's release.

Then through the night the hoof-beats
Went sounding like a flail;
And Goody Cole at cockcrow
Came forth from Ipswich jail.

"Here is a rhyme: — I hardly dare
To venture on its theme worn out;
What seems so sweet by Doon and Ayr
Sounds simply silly hereabout;
And pipes by lips Arcadian blown
Are only tin horns at our own.
Yet still the muse of pastoral walks with us,
While Hosea Biglow sings, our new Theocritus."

THE MAIDS OF ATTITASH.

In sky and wave the white clouds swam,
And the blue hills of Nottingham
Through gaps of leafy green
Across the lake were seen, —

When, in the shadow of the ash
That dreams its dream in Attitash,
In the warm summer weather,
Two maidens sat together.

They sat and watched in idle mood
The gleam and shade of lake and wood, —
The beach the keen light smote,
The white sail of a boat, —

Swan flocks of lilies shoreward lying,
In sweetness, not in music, dying, —
Hardhack, and virgin's-bower,
And white-spiked clethra-flower.

With careless ears they heard the plash
And breezy wash of Attitash,
The wood-bird's plaintive cry,
The locust's sharp reply.

And teased the while, with playful hand,
The shaggy dog of Newfoundland,
Whose uncouth frolic spilled
Their baskets berry-filled.

Then one, the beauty of whose eyes
Was evermore a great surprise,
Tossed back her queenly head,
And, lightly laughing, said, —

"No bridegroom's hand be mine to hold
That is not lined with yellow gold;
I tread no cottage-floor;
I own no lover poor.

"My love must come on silken wings,
With bridal lights of diamond rings, —
Not foul with kitchen smirch,
With tallow-dip for torch."

The other, on whose modest head
Was lesser dower of beauty shed,
With look for home-hearths meet,
And voice exceeding sweet,

Answered, — "We will not rivals be;
Take thou the gold, leave love to me;
Mine be the cottage small,
And thine the rich man's hall.

"I know, indeed, that wealth is good;
But lowly roof and simple food,
With love that hath no doubt,
Are more than gold without."

Hard by a farmer hale and young
His cradle in the rye-field swung,
Tracking the yellow plain
With windrows of ripe grain.

And still, whene'er he paused to whet
His scythe, the sidelong glance he met
Of large dark eyes, where strove
False pride and secret love.

Be strong, young mower of the grain;
That love shall overmatch disdain,
Its instincts soon or late
The heart shall vindicate.

In blouse of gray, with fishing-rod,
Half screened by leaves, a stranger trod
The margin of the pond,
Watching the group beyond.

The supreme hours unnoted come;
Unfelt the turning tides of doom;
And so the maids laughed on,
Nor dreamed what Fate had done, —

Nor knew the step was Destiny's
That rustled in the birchen trees,
As, with their lives forecast,
Fisher and mower passed.

Erelong by lake and rivulet side
The summer roses paled and died,
And Autumn's fingers shed
The maple's leaves of red.

Through the long gold-hazed afternoon,
Alone, but for the diving loon,
The partridge in the brake,
The black duck on the lake,

Beneath the shadow of the ash
Sat man and maid by Attitash;
And earth and air made room
For human hearts to bloom.

Soft spread the carpets of the sod,
And scarlet-oak and golden-rod
With blushes and with smiles
Lit up the forest aisles.

The mellow light the lake aslant,
The pebbled margin's ripple-chant
Attempered and low-toned,
The tender mystery owned.

And through the dream the lovers dreamed
Sweet sounds stole in and soft lights streamed;
The sunshine seemed to bless,
The air was a caress.

Not she who lightly laughed is there,
With scornful toss of midnight hair,
Her dark, disdainful eyes,
And proud lip worldly-wise.

Her haughty vow is still unsaid,
But all she dreamed and coveted
Wears, half to her surprise,
The youthful farmer's guise!

With more than all her old-time pride
She walks the rye-field at his side,
Careless of cot or hall,
Since love transfigures all.

Rich beyond dreams, the vantage-ground
Of life is gained; her hands have found
The talisman of old
That changes all to gold.

While she who could for love dispense
With all its glittering accidents,
And trust her heart alone,
Finds love and gold her own.

What wealth can buy or art can build
Awaits her; but her cup is filled
Even now unto the brim;
Her world is love and him!

The while he heard, the Book-man drew
A length of make-believing face,
With smothered mischief laughing through:
"Why, you shall sit in Ramsay's place,
And, with his Gentle Shepherd, keep
On Yankee hills immortal sheep,
While love-lorn swains and maids the seas beyond
Hold dreamy tryst around your huckleberry-pond."

The Traveller laughed: "Sir Galahad
Singing of love the Trouvere's lay!
How should he know the blindfold lad
From one of Vulcan's forge-boys?" — "Nay,
He better sees who stands outside
Than they who in procession ride,"
The Reader answered: "Selectmen and squire
Miss, while they make, the show that wayside folks admire.

"Here is a wild tale of the North,
Our travelled friend will own as one
Fit for a Norland Christmas hearth
And lips of Christian Andersen.
They tell it in the valleys green
Of the fair island he has seen,
Low lying off the pleasant Swedish shore,
Washed by the Baltic Sea, and watched by Elsinore.

KALLUNDBORG CHURCH.

"Tie stille, barn min!
Imorgen kommer Fin,
Fa'er din,
Og gi'er dig Esbern Snares öine og hjerte at lege med!"
Zealand Rhyme.

"BUILD at Kallundborg by the sea
A church as stately as church may be,
And there shalt thou wed my daughter fair,"
Said the Lord of Nesvek to Esbern Snare.

And the Baron laughed. But Esbern said,
"Though I lose my soul, I will Helva wed!"
And off he strode, in his pride of will,
To the Troll who dwelt in Ulshoi hill.

"Build, O Troll, a church for me
At Kallundborg by the mighty sea;
Build it stately, and build it fair,
Build it quickly," said Esbern Snare.

But the sly Dwarf said, "No work is wrought
By Trolls of the Hills, O man, for naught.
What wilt thou give for thy church so fair?"
"Set thy own price," quoth Esbern Snare.

"When Kallundborg church is builded well,
Thou must the name of its builder tell,
Or thy heart and thy eyes must be my boon."
"Build," said Esbern, "and build it soon."

By night and by day the Troll wrought on;
He hewed the timbers, he piled the stone;
But day by day, as the walls rose fair,
Darker and sadder grew Esbern Snare.

He listened by night, he watched by day,
He sought and thought, but he dared not pray;
In vain he called on the Elle-maids shy,
And the Neck and the Nis gave no reply.

Of his evil bargain far and wide
A rumor ran through the country-side;
And Helva of Nesvek, young and fair,
Prayed for the soul of Esbern Snare.

And now the church was wellnigh done;
One pillar it lacked, and one alone;
And the grim Troll muttered, "Fool thou art!
To-morrow gives me thy eyes and heart!"

By Kallundborg in black despair,
Through wood and meadow, walked Esbern Snare,
Till, worn and weary, the strong man sank
Under the birches on Ulshoi bank.

At his last day's work he heard the Troll
Hammer and delve in the quarry's hole;
Before him the church stood large and fair:
"I have builded my tomb," said Esbern Snare.

And he closed his eyes the sight to hide,
When he heard a light step at his side:
"O Esbern Snare!" a sweet voice said,
"Would I might die now in thy stead!"

With a grasp by love and by fear made strong,
He held her fast, and he held her long;
With the beating heart of a bird afeard,
She hid her face in his flame-red beard.

"O love!" he cried, "let me look to-day
In thine eyes ere mine are plucked away;
Let me hold thee close, let me feel thy heart
Ere mine by the Troll is torn apart!

"I sinned, O Helva, for love of thee!
Pray that the Lord Christ pardon me!"
But fast as she prayed, and faster still,
Hammered the Troll in Ulshoi hill.

He knew, as he wrought, that a loving heart
Was somehow baffling his evil art;
For more than spell of Elf or Troll
Is a maiden's prayer for her lover's soul.

And Esbern listened, and caught the sound
Of a Troll-wife singing underground:
"To-morrow comes Fine, father thine:
Lie still and hush thee, baby mine!

"Lie still, my darling! next sunrise
Thou 'lt play with Esbern Snare's heart and eyes!"
"Ho! ho!" quoth Esbern, "is that your game?
Thanks to the Troll-wife, I know his name!"

The Troll he heard him, and hurried on
To Kallundborg church with the lacking stone.
"Too late, Gaffer Fine!" cried Esbern Snare;
And Troll and pillar vanished in air!

That night the harvesters heard the sound
Of a woman sobbing underground,
And the voice of the Hill-Troll loud with blame
Of the careless singer who told his name.

Of the Troll of the Church they sing the rune
By the Northern Sea in the harvest moon;
And the fishers of Zealand hear him still
Scolding his wife in Ulshoi hill.

And seaward over its groves of birch
Still looks the tower of Kallundborg church,
Where, first at its altar, a wedded pair,
Stood Helva of Nesvek and Esbern Snare!

"What," asked the Traveller, "would our sires,
The old Norse story-tellers, say
Of sun-graved pictures, ocean wires,
And smoking steamboats of to-day?
And this, O, lady, by your leave,
Recalls your song of yester eve:
Pray, let us have that Cable-hymn once more."
"Hear, hear!" the Book-man cried, "the lady has the floor.

"These noisy waves below perhaps
To such a strain will lend their ear,
With softer voice and lighter lapse
Come stealing up the sands to hear,
And what they once refused to do
For old King Knut accord to you.
Nay, even the fishes shall your listeners be,
As once, the legend runs, they heard St. Anthony."

O lonely bay of Trinity,
O dreary shores, give ear!
Lean down unto the white-lipped sea
The voice of God to hear!

From world to world his couriers fly,
Thought-winged and shod with fire;
The angel of His stormy sky
Rides down the sunken wire.

What saith the herald of the Lord?
"The world's long strife is done;
Close wedded by that mystic cord,
Its continents are one.

"And one in heart, as one in blood,
Shall all her peoples be;
The hands of human brotherhood
Are clasped beneath the sea.

"Through Orient seas, o'er Afric's plain
And Asian mountains borne,
The vigor of the Northern brain
Shall nerve the world outworn.

"From clime to clime, from shore to shore,
Shall thrill the magic thread;
The new Prometheus steals once more
The fire that wakes the dead."

Throb on, strong pulse of thunder! beat
From answering beach to beach;
Fuse nations in thy kindly heat,
And melt the chains of each!

Wild terror of the sky above,
Glide tamed and dumb below!
Bear gently, Ocean's carrier-dove,
Thy errands to and fro.

Weave on, swift shuttle of the Lord,
Beneath the deep so far,
The bridal robe of earth's accord,
The funeral shroud of war!

For lo! the fall of Ocean's wall
Space mocked and time outrun;
And round the world the thought of all
Is as the thought of one!

The poles unite, the zones agree,
The tongues of striving cease;
As on the Sea of Galilee
The Christ is whispering, Peace!

"Glad prophecy! to this at last,"
The Reader said, "shall all things come.
Forgotten be the bugle's blast,
And battle-music of the drum.
A little while the world may run
Its old mad way, with needle-gun
And iron-clad, but truth, at last, shall reign:
The cradle-song of Christ was never sung in vain!"

Shifting his scattered papers, "Here,"
He said, as died the faint applause,
"Is something that I found last year
Down on the island known as Orr's.
I had it from a fair-haired girl
Who, oddly, bore the name of Pearl,
(As if by some droll freak of circumstance,)
Classic, or wellnigh so, in Harriet Stowe's romance."

THE DEAD SHIP OF HARPSWELL.

What flecks the outer gray beyond
The sundown's golden trail?
The white flash of a sea-bird's wing,
Or gleam of slanting sail?
Let young eyes watch from Neck and Point,
And sea-worn elders pray, —
The ghost of what was once a ship
Is sailing up the bay!

From gray sea-fog, from icy drift,
From peril and from pain,
The home-bound fisher greets thy lights,
O hundred-harbored Maine!
But many a keel shall seaward turn,
And many a sail outstand,
When, tall and white, the Dead Ship looms
Against the dusk of land.

She rounds the headland's bristling pines;
She threads the isle-set bay;
No spur of breeze can speed her on,
Nor ebb of tide delay.
Old men still walk the Isle of Orr
Who tell her date and name,
Old shipwrights sit in Freeport yards
Who hewed her oaken frame.

What weary doom of baffled quest,
Thou sad sea-ghost, is thine?
What makes thee in the haunts of home
A wonder and a sign?
No foot is on thy silent deck,
Upon thy helm no hand;
No ripple hath the soundless wind
That smites thee from the land!

For never comes the ship to port,
Howe'er the breeze may be;
Just when she nears the waiting shore
She drifts again to sea.
No tack of sail, nor turn of helm,
Nor sheer of veering side;
Stern-fore she drives to sea and night,
Against the wind and tide.

In vain o'er Harpswell Neck the star
Of evening guides her in;
In vain for her the lamps are lit
Within thy tower, Seguin!
In vain the harbor-boat shall hail,
In vain the pilot call;
No hand shall reef her spectral sail,
Or let her anchor fall.

Shake, brown old wives, with dreary joy,
Your gray-head hints of ill;
And, over sick-beds whispering low,
Your prophecies fulfil.
Some home amid yon birchen trees
Shall drape its door with woe;
And slowly where the Dead Ship sails,
The burial boat shall row!

From Wolf Neck and from Flying Point,
From island and from main,
From sheltered cove and tided creek,
Shall glide the funeral train.
The dead-boat with the bearers four,
The mourners at her stern, —
And one shall go the silent way
Who shall no more return!

And men shall sigh, and women weep,
Whose dear ones pale and pine,
And sadly over sunset seas
Await the ghostly sign.
They know not that its sails are filled
By pity's tender breath,
Nor see the Angel at the helm
Who steers the Ship of Death!

"Chill as a down-east breeze should be,"
The Book-man said. "A ghostly touch
The legend has. I 'm glad to see
Your flying Yankee beat the Dutch."
"Well, here is something of the sort
Which one midsummer day I caught
In Narraganset Bay, for lack of fish."
"We wait," the Traveller said; "serve hot or cold
your dish."

THE PALATINE.

Leagues north, as fly the gull and auk,
Point Judith watches with eye of hawk;
Leagues south, thy beacon flames, Montauk!

Lonely and wind-shorn, wood-forsaken,
With never a tree for Spring to waken,
For tryst of lovers or farewells taken,

Circled by waters that never freeze,
Beaten by billow and swept by breeze,
Lieth the island of Manisees,

Set at the mouth of the Sound to hold
The coast lights up on its turret old,
Yellow with moss and sea-fog mould.

Dreary the land when gust and sleet
At its doors and windows howl and beat,
And Winter laughs at its fires of peat!

But in summer time, when pool and pond,
Held in the laps of valleys fond,
Are blue as the glimpses of sea beyond;

When the hills are sweet with the brier-rose,
And, hid in the warm, soft dells, unclose
Flowers the mainland rarely knows;

When boats to their morning fishing go,
And, held to the wind and slanting low,
Whitening and darkening the small sails show, —

Then is that lonely island fair;
And the pale health-seeker findeth there
The wine of life in its pleasant air.

No greener valleys the sun invite,
On smoother beaches no sea-birds light,
No blue waves shatter to foam more white!

There, circling ever their narrow range,
Quaint tradition and legend strange
Live on unchallenged, and know no change.

Old wives spinning their webs of tow,
Or rocking weirdly to and fro
In and out of the peat's dull glow,

And old men mending their nets of twine,
Talk together of dream and sign,
Talk of the lost ship Palatine, —

The ship that, a hundred years before,
Freighted deep with its goodly store,
In the gales of the equinox went ashore.

The eager islanders one by one
Counted the shots of her signal gun,
And heard the crash when she drove right on!

Into the teeth of death she sped:
(May God forgive the hands that fed
The false lights over the rocky Head!)

O men and brothers! what sights were there!
White up-turned faces, hands stretched in prayer!
Where waves had pity, could ye not spare?

Down swooped the wreckers, like birds of prey
Tearing the heart of the ship away,
And the dead had never a word to say.

And then, with ghastly shimmer and shine
Over the rocks and the seething brine,
They burned the wreck of the Palatine.

In their cruel hearts, as they homeward sped,
"The sea and the rocks are dumb," they said:
"There 'll be no reckoning with the dead."

But the year went round, and when once more
Along their foam-white curves of shore
They heard the line-storm rave and roar,

Behold! again, with shimmer and shine,
Over the rocks and the seething brine,
The flaming wreck of the Palatine!

So, haply in fitter words than these,
Mending their nets on their patient knees
They tell the legend of Manisees.

Nor looks nor tones a doubt betray;
"It is known to us all," they quietly say;
"We too have seen it in our day."

Is there, then, no death for a word once spoken?
Was never a deed but left its token
Written on tables never broken?

Do the elements subtle reflections give?
Do pictures of all the ages live
On Nature's infinite negative,

Which, half in sport, in malice half,
She shows at times, with shudder or laugh,
Phantom and shadow in photograph?

For still, on many a moonless night,
From Kingston Head and from Montauk light
The spectre kindles and burns in sight.

Now low and dim, now clear and higher,
Leaps up the terrible Ghost of Fire,
Then, slowly sinking, the flames expire.

And the wise Sound skippers, though skies be fine,
Reef their sails when they see the sign
Of the blazing wreck of the Palatine!

"A fitter tale to scream than sing,"
The Book-man said. "Well, fancy, then,"
The Reader answered, "on the wing
The sea-birds shriek it, not for men,
But in the ear of wave and breeze!"
The Traveller mused: "Your Manisees
Is fairy-land: off Narraganset shore
Who ever saw the isle or heard its name before?

"'T is some strange land of Fly-away,
Whose dreamy shore the ship beguiles,
St. Brandan's in its sea-mist gray,
Or sunset loom of Fortunate Isles!"
"No ghost, but solid turf and rock
Is the good island known as Block,"
The Reader said. "For beauty and for ease
I chose its Indian name, soft-flowing Manisees!

"But let it pass; here is a bit
Of unrhymed story, with a hint
Of the old preaching mood in it,
The sort of sidelong moral squint
Our friend objects to, which has grown,
I fear, a habit of my own.
'T was written when the Asian plague drew near,
And the land held its breath and paled with sudden fear."

ABRAHAM DAVENPORT.

In the old days (a custom laid aside
With breeches and cocked hats) the people sent
Their wisest men to make the public laws.
And so, from a brown homestead, where the Sound
Drinks the small tribute of the Mianas,

Waved over by the woods of Rippowams,
And hallowed by pure lives and tranquil deaths,
Stamford sent up to the councils of the State
Wisdom and grace in Abraham Davenport.

'T was on a May-day of the far old year
Seventeen hundred eighty, that there fell
Over the bloom and sweet life of the Spring,
Over the fresh earth and the heaven of noon,
A horror of great darkness, like the night
In day of which the Norland sagas tell, —
The Twilight of the Gods. The low-hung sky
Was black with ominous clouds, save where its rim
Was fringed with a dull glow, like that which climbs
The crater's sides from the red hell below.
Birds ceased to sing, and all the barn-yard fowls
Roosted; the cattle at the pasture bars
Lowed, and looked homeward; bats on leathern wings

Flitted abroad; the sounds of labor died;
Men prayed, and women wept; all ears grew sharp
To hear the doom-blast of the trumpet shatter
The black sky, that the dreadful face of Christ
Might look from the rent clouds, not as he looked
A loving guest at Bethany, but stern
As Justice and inexorable Law.

Meanwhile in the old State-House, dim as ghosts,
Sat the lawgivers of Connecticut,
Trembling beneath their legislative robes.
"It is the Lord's Great Day! Let us adjourn,"
Some said; and then, as if with one accord,
All eyes were turned to Abraham Davenport.
He rose, slow cleaving with his steady voice
The intolerable hush. "This well may be
The Day of Judgment which the world awaits;
But be it so or not, I only know

My present duty, and my Lord's command
To occupy till he come. So at the post
Where he hath set me in his providence,
I choose, for one, to meet him face to face, —
No faithless servant frightened from my task,
But ready when the Lord of the harvest calls;
And therefore, with all reverence, I would say,
Let God do his work, we will see to ours.
Bring in the candles." And they brought them in.

Then by the flaring lights the Speaker read,
Albeit with husky voice and shaking hands,
An act to amend an act to regulate
The shad and alewive fisheries. Whereupon
Wisely and well spake Abraham Davenport,
Straight to the question, with no figures of speech
Save the ten Arab signs, yet not without
The shrewd dry humor natural to the man:

His awe-struck colleagues listening all the while,
Between the pauses of his argument,
To hear the thunder of the wrath of God
Break from the hollow trumpet of the cloud.

And there he stands in memory to this day,
Erect, self-poised, a rugged face, half seen
Against the background of unnatural dark,
A witness to the ages as they pass,
That simple duty hath no place for fear.

He ceased: just then the ocean seemed
To lift a half-faced moon in sight;
And, shoreward, o'er the waters gleamed,
From crest to crest, a line of light,

Such as of old, with solemn awe,
The fishers by Gennesaret saw,
When dry-shod o'er it walked the Son of God,
Tracking the waves with light where'er his sandals trod.

Silently for a space each eye
Upon that sudden glory turned;
Cool from the land the breeze blew by,
The tent-ropes flapped, the long beach churned
Its waves to foam; on either hand
Stretched, far as sight, the hills of sand;
With bays of marsh, and capes of bush and tree,
The wood's black shore-line loomed beyond the meadowy sea.

The lady rose to leave. "One song,
Or hymn," they urged, "before we part."

And she, with lips to which belong
Sweet intuitions of all art,
Gave to the winds of night a strain
Which they who heard would hear again;
And to her voice the solemn ocean lent,
Touching its harp of sand, a deep accompaniment.

The harp at Nature's advent strung
Has never ceased to play;
The song the stars of morning sung
Has never died away.

And prayer is made, and praise is given,
By all things near and far:
The ocean looketh up to heaven,
And mirrors every star.

Its waves are kneeling on the strand,
As kneels the human knee,
Their white locks bowing to the sand,
The priesthood of the sea!

They pour their glittering treasures forth,
Their gifts of pearl they bring,
And all the listening hills of earth
Take up the song they sing.

The green earth sends her incense up
From many a mountain shrine;
From folded leaf and dewy cup
She pours her sacred wine.

The mists above the morning rills
Rise white as wings of prayer;
The altar curtains of the hills
Are sunset's purple air.

The winds with hymns of praise are loud,
Or low with sobs of pain, —
The thunder-organ of the cloud,
The dropping tears of rain.

With drooping head and branches crossed
The twilight forest grieves,
Or speaks with tongues of Pentecost
From all its sunlit leaves.

The blue sky is the temple's arch,
Its transept earth and air,
The music of its starry march
The chorus of a prayer.

So Nature keeps the reverent frame
With which her years began,
And all her signs and voices shame
The prayerless heart of man.

The singer ceased. The moon's white rays
Fell on the rapt, still face of her.
"*Allah il Allah!* He hath praise
From all things," said the Traveller.
"Oft from the desert's silent nights,
And mountain hymns of sunset lights,
My heart has felt rebuke, as in his tent
The Moslem's prayer has shamed my Christian knee
unbent."

He paused, and lo! far, faint, and slow
The bells in Newbury's steeples tolled
The twelve dead hours; the lamp burned low;
The singer sought her canvas fold.
One sadly said, "At break of day
We strike our tent and go our way."
But one made answer cheerily, "Never fear,
We 'll pitch this tent of ours in type another year."

NATIONAL LYRICS.

THE MANTLE OF ST. JOHN DE MATHA.

A Legend of "The Red, White, and Blue," A. D. 1154-1864.

A strong and mighty Angel,
Calm, terrible, and bright,
The cross in blended red and blue
Upon his mantle white!

Two captives by him kneeling,
Each on his broken chain,
Sang praise to God who raiseth
The dead to life again!

Dropping his cross-wrought mantle,
"Wear this," the Angel said;
"Take thou, O Freedom's priest, its sign, —
The white, the blue, and red."

Then rose up John de Matha
In the strength the Lord Christ gave,
And begged through all the land of France
The ransom of the slave.

The gates of tower and castle
Before him open flew,
The drawbridge at his coming fell,
The door-bolt backward drew.

For all men owned his errand,
And paid his righteous tax;
And the hearts of lord and peasant
Were in his hands as wax.

At last, outbound from Tunis,
His bark her anchor weighed,
Freighted with seven score Christian souls
Whose ransom he had paid.

But, torn by Paynim hatred,
Her sails in tatters hung;
And on the wild waves, rudderless,
A shattered hulk she swung.

"God save us!" cried the captain,
For naught can man avail:
O, woe betide the ship that lacks
Her rudder and her sail!

"Behind us are the Moormen;
At sea we sink or strand:
There 's death upon the water,
There 's death upon the land!"

Then up spake John de Matha:
"God's errands never fail!
Take thou the mantle which I wear,
And make of it a sail."

They raised the cross-wrought mantle,
The blue, the white, the red;
And straight before the wind off-shore
The ship of Freedom sped.

"God help us!" cried the seamen,
"For vain is mortal skill:
The good ship on a stormy sea
Is drifting at its will."

Then up spake John de Matha:
"My mariners, never fear!
The Lord whose breath has filled her sail
May well our vessel steer!"

So on through storm and darkness
They drove for weary hours;
And lo! the third gray morning shone
On Ostia's friendly towers.

And on the walls the watchers
The ship of mercy knew, —
They knew far off its holy cross,
The red, the white, and blue.

And the bells in all the steeples
Rang out in glad accord,
To welcome home to Christian soil
The ransomed of the Lord.

So runs the ancient legend
By bard and painter told;
And lo! the cycle rounds again,
The new is as the old!

With rudder foully broken,
And sails by traitors torn,
Our country on a midnight sea
Is waiting for the morn.

Before her, nameless terror;
Behind, the pirate foe;
The clouds are black above her,
The sea is white below.

The hope of all who suffer,
The dread of all who wrong,
She drifts in darkness and in storm,
How long, O Lord! how long?

But courage, O my mariners!
Ye shall not suffer wreck,
While up to God the freedman's prayers
Are rising from your deck.

Is not your sail the banner
Which God hath blest anew,
The mantle that De Matha wore,
The red, the white, the blue?

Its hues are all of heaven, —
The red of sunset's dye,
The whiteness of the moon-lit cloud,
The blue of morning's sky.

Wait cheerily, then, O mariners,
For daylight and for land;
The breath of God is in your sail,
Your rudder is His hand.

Sail on, sail on, deep-freighted
With blessings and with hopes;
The saints of old with shadowy hands
Are pulling at your ropes.

Behind ye holy martyrs
Uplift the palm and crown;
Before ye unborn ages send
Their benedictions down.

Take heart from John de Matha!—
God's errands never fail!
Sweep on through storm and darkness,
The thunder and the hail!

Sail on! The morning cometh,
The port ye yet shall win;
And all the bells of God shall ring
The good ship bravely in!

WHAT THE BIRDS SAID.

THE birds against the April wind
Flew northward, singing as they flew;
They sang, "The land we leave behind
Has swords for corn-blades, blood for dew."

"O wild-birds, flying from the South,
What saw and heard ye, gazing down?"
"We saw the mortar's upturned mouth,
The sickened camp, the blazing town!

"Beneath the bivouac's starry lamps,
We saw your march-worn children die;
In shrouds of moss, in cypress swamps,
We saw your dead uncoffined lie.

"We heard the starving prisoner's sighs,
And saw, from line and trench, your sons
Follow our flight with home-sick eyes
Beyond the battery's smoking guns."

"And heard and saw ye only wrong
And pain," I cried, "O wing-worn flocks?"
"We heard," they sang, "the freedman's song,
The crash of Slavery's broken locks!

"We saw from new, uprising States
The treason-nursing mischief spurned,
As, crowding Freedom's ample gates,
The long-estranged and lost returned.

"O'er dusky faces, seamed and old,
And hands horn-hard with unpaid toil,
With hope in every rustling fold,
We saw your star-dropt flag uncoil.

"And struggling up through sounds accursed,
A grateful murmur clomb the air;
A whisper scarcely heard at first,
It filled the listening heavens with prayer.

"And sweet and far, as from a star,
Replied a voice which shall not cease,
Till, drowning all the noise of war,
It sings the blessed song of peace!"

So to me, in a doubtful day
Of chill and slowly greening spring,
Low stooping from the cloudy gray,
The wild-birds sang or seemed to sing.

They vanished in the misty air,
The song went with them in their flight;
But lo! they left the sunset fair,
And in the evening there was light.

LAUS DEO!

ON HEARING THE BELLS RING ON THE PASSAGE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ABOLISHING SLAVERY.

It is done!
Clang of bell and roar of gun
Send the tidings up and down.
How the belfries rock and reel!
How the great guns, peal on peal,
Fling the joy from town to town!

Ring, O bells!
Every stroke exulting tells
Of the burial hour of crime.
Loud and long, that all may hear,
Ring for every listening ear
Of Eternity and Time!

Let us kneel:
God's own voice is in that peal,
And this spot is holy ground.
Lord, forgive us! What are we,
That our eyes this glory see,
That our ears have heard the sound!

For the Lord
On the whirlwind is abroad;
In the earthquake he has spoken;
He has smitten with his thunder
The iron walls asunder,
And the gates of brass are broken!

Loud and long
Lift the old exulting song;
Sing with Miriam by the sea

He has cast the mighty down ;
Horse and rider sink and drown ;
" He hath triumphed gloriously ! "

Did we dare,
In our agony of prayer,
Ask for more than He has done ?
When was ever his right hand
Over any time or land
Stretched as now beneath the sun ?

How they pale,
Ancient myth and song and tale,
In this wonder of our days,
When the cruel rod of war
Blossoms white with righteous law,
And the wrath of man is praise !

Blotted out!
All within and all about
Shall a fresher life begin;
Freer breathe the universe
As it rolls its heavy curse
On the dead and buried sin!

It is done!
In the circuit of the sun
Shall the sound thereof go forth.
It shall bid the sad rejoice,
It shall give the dumb a voice,
It shall belt with joy the earth!

Ring and swing,
Bells of joy! On morning's wing
Send the song of praise abroad!

With a sound of broken chains
Tell the nations that He reigns,
Who alone is Lord and God!

THE PEACE AUTUMN.

WRITTEN FOR THE ESSEX COUNTY AGRICULTURAL FESTIVAL, 1865.

THANK God for rest, where none molest,
And none can make afraid, —
For Peace that sits as Plenty's guest
Beneath the homestead shade!

Bring pike and gun, the sword's red scourge,
The negro's broken chains,
And beat them at the blacksmith's forge
To ploughshares for our plains.

Alike henceforth our hills of snow,
And vales where cotton flowers;
All streams that flow, all winds that blow
Are Freedom's motive-powers.

Henceforth to Labor's chivalry
Be knightly honors paid;
For nobler than the sword's shall be
The sickle's accolade.

Build up an altar to the Lord,
O grateful hearts of ours!
And shape it of the greenest sward
That ever drank the showers.

Lay all the bloom of gardens there,
And there the orchard fruits;
Bring golden grain from sun and air,
From earth her goodly roots.

There let our banners droop and flow,
The stars uprise and fall;
Our roll of martyrs, sad and slow,
Let sighing breezes call.

Their names let hands of horn and tan
And rough-shod feet applaud,
Who died to make the slave a man,
And link with toil reward.

There let the common heart keep time
To such an anthem sung
As never swelled on poet's rhyme,
Or thrilled on singer's tongue.

Song of our burden and relief,
Of peace and long annoy;
The passion of our mighty grief
And our exceeding joy!

A song of praise to Him who filled
The harvests sown in tears,
And gave each field a double yield
To feed our battle-years!

A song of faith that trusts the end
To match the good begun,
Nor doubts the power of Love to blend
The hearts of men as one!

TO THE THIRTY-NINTH CONGRESS.

O PEOPLE chosen! are ye not
Likewise the chosen of the Lord,
To do his will and speak his word?

From the loud thunder-storm of war
Not man alone hath called ye forth,
But he, the God of all the earth!

The torch of vengeance in your hands
He quenches; unto Him belongs
The solemn recompense of wrongs.

Enough of blood the land has seen,
And not by cell or gallows-stair
Shall ye the way of God prepare.

Say to the pardon-seekers, — Keep
Your manhood, bend no suppliant knees,
Nor palter with unworthy pleas.

Above your voices sounds the wail
Of starving men; we shut in vain
Our eyes to Pillow's ghastly stain.

What words can drown that bitter cry?
What tears wash out that stain of death?
What oaths confirm your broken faith?

From you alone the guaranty
Of union, freedom, peace, we claim;
We urge no conqueror's terms of shame.

Alas! no victor's pride is ours;
We bend above our triumphs won
Like David o'er his rebel son.

Be men, not beggars. Cancel all
By one brave, generous action; trust
Your better instincts, and be just!

Make all men peers before the law,
Take hands from off the negro's throat,
Give black and white an equal vote.

Keep all your forfeit lives and lands,
But give the common law's redress
To labor's utter nakedness.

Revive the old heroic will;
Be in the right as brave and strong
As ye have proved you in the wrong.

Defeat shall then be victory,
Your loss the wealth of full amends,
And hate be love, and foes be friends.

Then buried be the dreadful past,
Its common slain be mourned, and let
All memories soften to regret.

Then shall the Union's mother-heart
Her lost and wandering ones recall,
Forgiving and restoring all, —

And Freedom break her marble trance
Above the Capitolian dome,
Stretch hands, and bid ye welcome home!

OCCASIONAL POEMS.

THE ETERNAL GOODNESS.

O FRIENDS! with whom my feet have trod
The quiet aisles of prayer,
Glad witness to your zeal for God
And love of man I bear.

I trace your lines of argument;
Your logic linked and strong
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,
And fears a doubt as wrong.

But still my human hands are weak
To hold your iron creeds;
Against the words ye bid me speak
My heart within me pleads.

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God.

Ye praise His justice; even such
His pitying love I deem:
Ye seek a king; I fain would touch
The robe that hath no seam.

Ye see the curse which overbroods
A world of pain and loss;
I hear our Lord's beatitudes
And prayer upon the cross.

More than your schoolmen teach, within
Myself, alas! I know;
Too dark ye cannot paint the sin,
Too small the merit show.

I bow my forehead to the dust,
I veil mine eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self-distrust,
A prayer without a claim.

I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within;
I hear, with groan and travail-cries,
The world confess its sin.

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed stake my spirit clings:
I know that God is good!

Not mine to look when cherubim
And seraphs may not see,
But nothing can be good in Him
Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above:
I know not of His hate, — I know
His goodness and His love.

I dimly guess from blessings known
Of greater out of sight,
And, with the chastened Psalmist, own
His judgments too are right.

I long for household voices gone,
For vanished smiles I long,
But God hath led my dear ones on,
And He can do no wrong.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed He will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

No offering of my own I have,
Nor works my faith to prove;
I can but give the gifts He gave,
And plead His love for love.

And so beside the Silent Sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

O brothers! if my faith is vain,
If hopes like these betray,
Pray for me that my feet may gain
The sure and safer way.

And Thou, O Lord! by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee!

OUR MASTER.

Immortal Love, forever full,
Forever flowing free,
Forever shared, forever whole,
A never-ebbing sea!

Our outward lips confess the name
All other names above;
Love only knoweth whence it came,
And comprehendeth love.

Blow, winds of God, awake and blow
The mists of earth away!
Shine out, O Light Divine, and show
How wide and far we stray!

Hush every lip, close every book,
The strife of tongues forbear;
Why forward reach, or backward look,
For love that clasps like air?

We may not climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down:
In vain we search the lowest deeps,
For him no depths can drown.

Nor holy bread, nor blood of grape,
The lineaments restore
Of him we know in outward shape
And in the flesh no more.

He cometh not a king to reign;
The world's long hope is dim;
The weary centuries watch in vain
The clouds of heaven for him.

Death comes, life goes; the asking eye
And ear are answerless;
The grave is dumb, the hollow sky
Is sad with silentness.

The letter fails, and systems fall,
And every symbol wanes;
The Spirit over-brooding all
Eternal Love remains.

And not for signs in heaven above
Or earth below they look,
Who know with John his smile of love,
With Peter his rebuke.

In joy of inward peace, or sense
Of sorrow over sin,
He is his own best evidence,
His witness is within.

No fable old, nor mythic lore,
Nor dream of bards and seers,
No dead fact stranded on the shore
Of the oblivious years; —

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is he;
And faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

The healing of his seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.

Through him the first fond prayers are said
Our lips of childhood frame,
The last low whispers of our dead
Are burdened with his name.

O Lord and Master of us all!
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own thy sway, we hear thy call,
We test our lives by thine.

Thou judgest us; thy purity
Doth all our lusts condemn;
The love that draws us nearer thee
Is hot with wrath to them.

Our thoughts lie open to thy sight;
And, naked to thy glance,
Our secret sins are in the light
Of thy pure countenance.

Thy healing pains, a keen distress
Thy tender light shines in;
Thy sweetness is the bitterness,
Thy grace the pang of sin.

Yet, weak and blinded though we be,
Thou dost our service own;
We bring our varying gifts to thee,
And thou rejectest none.

To thee our full humanity,
Its joys and pains, belong;
The wrong of man to man on thee
Inflicts a deeper wrong.

Who hates hates thee, who loves becomes
Therein to thee allied;
All sweet accords of hearts and homes
In thee are multiplied.

Deep strike thy roots, O heavenly Vine,
Within our earthly sod,
Most human and yet most divine,
The flower of man and God!

O Love! O Life! Our faith and sight
Thy presence maketh one:
As through transfigured clouds of white
We trace the noon-day sun.

So, to our mortal eyes subdued,
Flesh-veiled, but not concealed,
We know in thee the fatherhood
And heart of God revealed.

We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phrase we pray;
But, dim or clear, we own in thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way!

The homage that we render thee
Is still our Father's own;
Nor jealous claim or rivalry
Divides the Cross and Throne.

To do thy will is more than praise,
As words are less than deeds,
And simple trust can find thy ways
We miss with chart of creeds.

No pride of self thy service hath,
No place for me and mine;
Our human strength is weakness, death
Our life, apart from thine.

Apart from thee all gain is loss,
All labor vainly done;
The solemn shadow of thy Cross
Is better than the sun.

Alone, O Love ineffable!
Thy saving name is given;
To turn aside from thee is hell,
To walk with thee is heaven!

How vain, secure in all thou art,
Our noisy championship! —
The sighing of the contrite heart
Is more than flattering lip.

Not thine the bigot's partial plea,
Nor thine the zealot's ban;
Thou well canst spare a love of thee
Which ends in hate of man.

Our Friend, our Brother, and our Lord,
What may thy service be? —
Nor name, nor form, nor ritual word,
But simply following thee.

We bring no ghastly holocaust,
We pile no graven stone;
He serves thee best who loveth most
His brothers and thy own.

Thy litanies, sweet offices
Of love and gratitude;
Thy sacramental liturgies,
The joy of doing good.

In vain shall waves of incense drift
The vaulted nave around,
In vain the minster turret lift
Its brazen weights of sound.

The heart must ring thy Christmas bells,
Thy inward altars raise;
Its faith and hope thy canticles,
And its obedience praise!

THE VANISHERS.

Sweetest of all childlike dreams
In the simple Indian lore
Still to me the legend seems
Of the shapes who flit before.

Flitting, passing, seen and gone,
Never reached nor found at rest,
Baffling search, but beckoning on
To the Sunset of the Blest.

From the clefts of mountain rocks,
Through the dark of lowland firs,
Flash the eyes and flow the locks
Of the mystic Vanishers!

And the fisher in his skiff,
  And the hunter on the moss,
Hear their call from cape and cliff,
  See their hands the birch-leaves toss.

Wistful, longing, through the green
  Twilight of the clustered pines,
In their faces rarely seen
  Beauty more than mortal shines.

Fringed with gold their mantles flow
  On the slopes of westering knolls;
In the wind they whisper low
  Of the Sunset Land of Souls.

Doubt who may, O friend of mine!
  Thou and I have seen them too;
On before with beck and sign
  Still they glide, and we pursue.

More than clouds of purple trail
In the gold of setting day;
More than gleams of wing or sail
Beckon from the sea-mist gray.

Glimpses of immortal youth,
Gleams and glories seen and lost,
Far-heard voices weep with truth
As the tongues of Pentecost, —

Beauty that eludes our grasp,
Sweetness that transcends our taste,
Loving hands we may not clasp,
Shining feet that mock our haste, —

Gentle eyes we closed below,
Tender voices heard once more,
Smile and call us, as they go
On and onward, still before.

Guided thus, O friend of mine!
Let us walk our little way,
Knowing by each beckoning sign
That we are not quite astray.

Chase we still with baffled feet,
Smiling eye and waving hand,
Sought and seeker soon shall meet,
Lost and found, in Sunset Land!

REVISITED.

READ AT THE "LAURELS," ON THE MERRIMACK,
6TH MONTH, 1865.

THE roll of drums and the bugle's wailing
Vex the air of our vales no more;
The spear is beaten to hooks of pruning,
The share is the sword the soldier wore!

Sing soft, sing low, our lowland river,
Under thy banks of laurel bloom;
Softly and sweet, as the hour beseemeth,
Sing us the songs of peace and home.

Let all the tenderer voices of nature
Temper the triumph and chasten mirth,
Full of the infinite love and pity
For fallen martyr and darkened hearth.

But to Him who gives us beauty for ashes,
And the oil of joy for mourning long,
Let thy hills give thanks, and all thy waters
Break into jubilant waves of song!

Bring us the airs of hills and forests,
The sweet aroma of birch and pine,
Give us a waft of the north-wind, laden
With sweet-brier odors and breath of kine!

Bring us the purple of mountain sunsets,
Shadows of clouds that rake the hills,
The green repose of thy Plymouth meadows,
The gleam and ripple of Campton rills.

Lead us away in shadow and sunshine,
Slaves of fancy, through all thy miles,
The winding ways of Pemigewasset,
And Winnipesaukee's hundred isles.

Shatter in sunshine over thy ledges,
Laugh in thy plunges from fall to fall;
Play with thy fringes of elms, and darken
Under the shade of the mountain wall.

The cradle-song of thy hillside fountains
Here in thy glory and strength repeat;
Give us a taste of thy upland music,
Show us the dance of thy silver feet.

Into thy dutiful life of uses
Pour the music and weave the flowers;
With the song of birds and bloom of meadows
Lighten and gladden thy heart and hours.

Sing on! bring down, O lowland river,
The joy of the hills to the waiting sea;
The wealth of the vales, the pomp of mountains,
The breath of the woodlands, bear with thee.

Here, in the calm of thy seaward valley,
Mirth and labor shall hold their truce;
Dance of water and mill of grinding,
Both are beauty and both are use.

Type of the Northland's strength and glory,
Pride and hope of our home and race, —
Freedom lending to rugged labor
Tints of beauty and lines of grace.

Once again, O beautiful river,
Hear our greetings and take our thanks;
Hither we come, as Eastern pilgrims
Throng to the Jordan's sacred banks.

For though by the Master's feet untrodden,
Though never his word has stilled thy waves,
Well for us may thy shores be holy,
With Christian altars and saintly graves.

And well may we own thy hint and token
Of fairer valleys and streams than these,
Where the rivers of God are full of water,
And full of sap are his healing trees!

THE COMMON QUESTION.

Behind us at our evening meal
The gray bird ate his fill,
Swung downward by a single claw,
And wiped his hookéd bill.

He shook his wings and crimson tail,
And set his head aslant,
And, in his sharp, impatient way,
Asked, "What does Charlie want?"

"Fie, silly bird!" I answered, "tuck
Your head beneath your wing,
And go to sleep";—but o'er and o'er
He asked the selfsame thing.

Then, smiling, to myself I said:—
How like are men and birds!
We all are saying what he says,
In action or in words.

The boy with whip and top and drum,
The girl with hoop and doll,
And men with lands and houses, ask
The question of Poor Poll.

However full, with something more
We fain the bag would cram;
We sigh above our crowded nets
For fish that never swam.

No bounty of indulgent Heaven
The vague desire can stay;
Self-love is still a Tartar mill
For grinding prayers alway.

The dear God hears and pities all;
He knoweth all our wants;
And what we blindly ask of him
His love withholds or grants.

And so I sometimes think our prayers
Might well be merged in one;
And nest and perch and hearth and church
Repeat, "Thy will be done."

BRYANT ON HIS BIRTHDAY.

We praise not now the poet's art,
The rounded beauty of his song;
Who weighs him from his life apart
Must do his nobler nature wrong.

Not for the eye, familiar grown
With charms to common sight denied, —
The marvellous gift he shares alone
With him who walked on Rydal-side;

Not for rapt hymn nor woodland lay,
Too grave for smiles, too sweet for tears;
We speak his praise who wears to-day
The glory of his seventy years.

When Peace brings Freedom in her train,
Let happy lips his songs rehearse;
His life is now his noblest strain,
His manhood better than his verse!

Thank God! his hand on Nature's keys
Its cunning keeps at life's full span;
But, dimmed and dwarfed, in times like these,
The poet seems beside the man!

So be it! let the garlands die,
The singer's wreath, the painter's meed,
Let our names perish, if thereby
Our country may be saved and freed!

HYMN

FOR THE OPENING OF THOMAS STARR KING'S HOUSE OF WORSHIP, 1864.

Amidst these glorious works of thine,
The solemn minarets of the pine,
And awful Shasta's icy shrine, —

Where swell thy hymns from wave and gale,
And organ-thunders never fail,
Behind the cataract's silver veil, —

Our puny walls to Thee we raise,
Our poor reed-music sounds thy praise:
Forgive, O Lord, our childish ways!

For, kneeling on these altar-stairs,
We urge Thee not with selfish prayers,
Nor murmur at our daily cares.

Before Thee, in an evil day,
Our country's bleeding heart we lay,
And dare not ask thy hand to stay;

But, through the war-cloud, pray to thee
For union, but a union free,
With peace that comes of purity!

That Thou wilt bare thy arm to save,
And, smiting through this Red Sea wave,
Make broad a pathway for the slave!

For us, confessing all our need,
We trust nor rite nor word nor deed,
Nor yet the broken staff of creed.

Assured alone that Thou art good
To each, as to the multitude,
Eternal Love and Fatherhood, —

Weak, sinful, blind, to Thee we kneel,
Stretch dumbly forth our hands, and feel
Our weakness is our strong appeal.

So, by these Western gates of Even
We wait to see with thy forgiven
The opening Golden Gate of Heaven!

Suffice it now. In time to be
Shall holier altars rise to thee, —
Thy Church our broad humanity!

White flowers of love its walls shall climb,
Soft bells of peace shall ring its chime,
Its days shall all be holy time.

A sweeter song shall then be heard, —
The music of the world's accord
Confessing Christ, the Inward Word!

That song shall swell from shore to shore,
One hope, one faith, one love, restore
The seamless robe that Jesus wore.

THOMAS STARR KING.

The great work laid upon his twoscore years
Is done, and well done. If we drop our tears,
Who loved him as few men were ever loved,
We mourn no blighted hope nor broken plan
With him whose life stands rounded and approved
In the full growth and stature of a man.
Mingle, O bells, along the Western slope,
With your deep toll a sound of faith and hope!
Wave cheerily still, O banner, half-way down,
From thousand-masted bay and steepled town!
Let the strong organ with its loftiest swell
Lift the proud sorrow of the land, and tell
That the brave sower saw his ripened grain.

O East and West! O morn and sunset twain
No more forever! — has he lived in vain
Who, priest of Freedom, made ye one, and told
Your bridal service from his lips of gold?

Cambridge: Electrotyped and Printed by Welch, Bigelow, & Co.